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Board selects officers, exec. committee

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

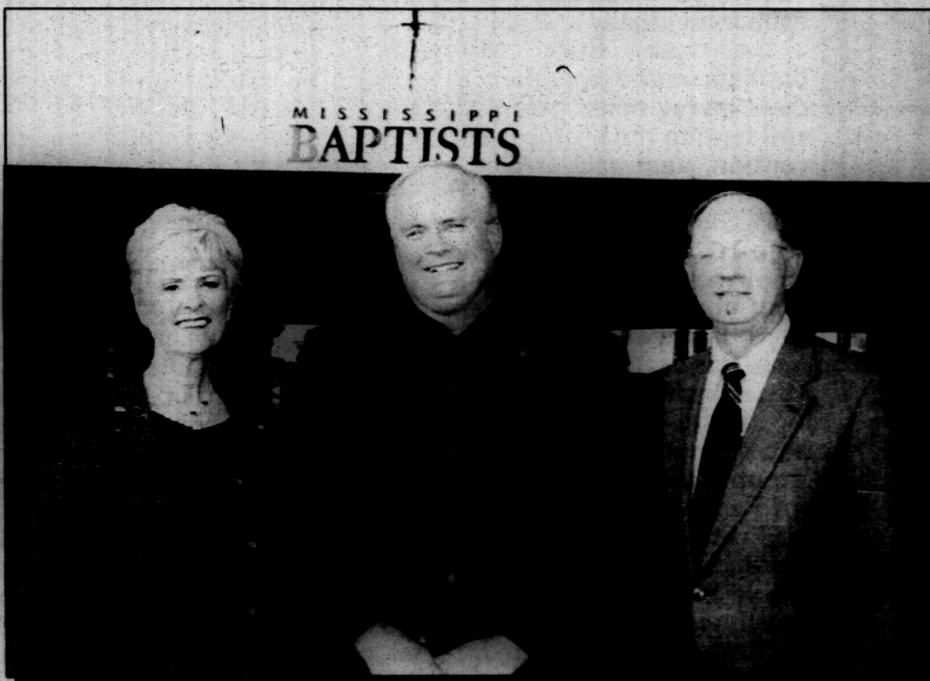
Members of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, meeting in the chapel of the Baptist Building in Jackson October 31 after the adjournment of the 2001 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, chose a slate of officers for the coming year and elected the board's executive committee.

Chosen to serve as president of the board was Wayne VanHorn, pastor of First Church, Columbia. VanHorn was already serving as board president, having succeeded to the office from vice-president earlier in the year when then-president Gary Richardson accepted the call to pastor North Oxford Church, Oxford.

Richardson, who was pastor of First Church, West Point, at the time, was serving on the board as the Clay County representative from Golden Triangle Association headquartered in Columbus, and thus was constitutionally ineligible to continue as a board member when he moved to Oxford.

VanHorn is one of 18 at-large members of the board. He was a member of the board's executive committee for the 2000-01 term.

Chosen to serve with VanHorn as board vice-president was Gordon Sansing, pastor of Forest Church, Forest, and the representative from Scott Association in Forest. Sandra Gunn, a member of First Church, Biloxi, and an at-large representative, was chosen as board secretary for a second term.



MBCB OFFICERS — New officers of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board are (from left) Sandra Gunn, member of First Church, Biloxi - recording secretary; Wayne VanHorn, pastor of First Church, Columbia - president; and Gordon Sansing, pastor of Forest Church, Forest - vice-president. The officers were elected at the organizational meeting of the board immediately after the adjournment of the 2001 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Also elected during the organizational meeting was the board's executive committee, which is chosen by board members from among themselves to manage convention board activities when the full board is not in session.

In addition to the three convention board officers, the 2001-02 executive committee members are:

- ♦ Jim Butler, pastor of Trinity Church, Southaven, and an at-large representative.
- ♦ Kent Cochran, pastor of Pleasant

Grove Church, Brookhaven, and the representative from Lincoln Association.

- ♦ Clarence Cooper, pastor of Emmanuel Church, Grenada, and the Grenada County representative from North Central Association headquartered in Grenada.

- ♦ Dan Howard, pastor of First Church, Philadelphia, and the representative from Neshoba Association.

- ♦ Rickey Kennedy, pastor of East McComb Church, McComb, and the representative from Pike Association.

- ♦ Bobby Kirk, member of Roundaway Church, Doddsville, and an at-large representative.

- ♦ Ken Lundquist, member of First Church, Jackson, and the Hinds County representative from Metro Association.

- ♦ Dell Scoper, member of First Church, Laurel, and an at-large representative.

- ♦ Forrest Sheffield, pastor of Harrisburg Church, Tupelo, and the representative from Lee Association.

- ♦ Robert Upchurch, member of Calvary Church, Tupelo, and an at-large representative.

- ♦ Diane White, member of Midway Church, Meridian, and an at-large representative.

- ♦ Rex Yancey, pastor of First Church, Pascagoula, and an at-large representative.

- ♦ Kiely Young, associate pastor of Michael Memorial Church, Gulfport, and the Harrison County representative from Gulf Coast Association.

Volunteers honored at Lay Missions Conference

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

The Lay Missions Conference and banquet, held annually during the Mississippi Baptist Convention, was presented at First Church, Jackson, on October 29.

Several conferences were presented during the afternoon, including sessions dealing with agricultural missions, led by Ernest Scruggs, president of the Agricultural Fellowship; Campers on Mission, led by Ricky Youngblood, vice-president of Campers on Mission; construction missions, led by Jack Honea, president, Construction Mission; educational missions, led by S.A. Moorhead, president, Education Fellowship; and Volunteers in Missions, led

by Sidney Pitts, Volunteers in Missions state coordinator.

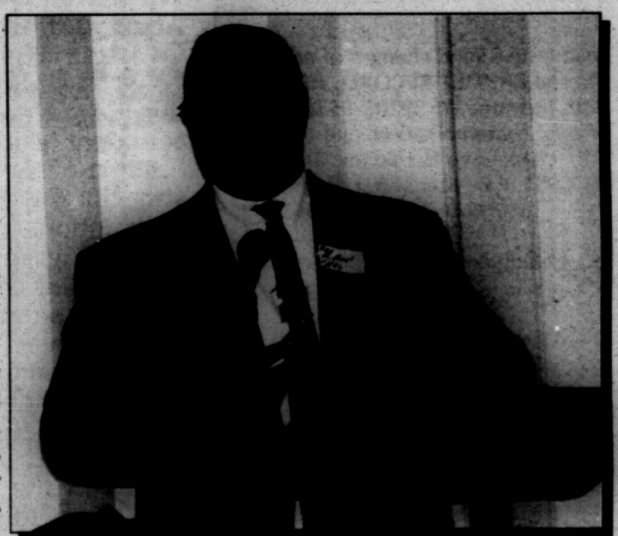
Luz del Mundo (Light of the World), a group consisting of pastors and other workers in state Hispanic churches, provided music for the evening banquet. Don Dent, regional leader for Southeast Asia and Oceania for the International Mission Board, briefed banquet attendees on his work. Norman Bailey, of Temple Church, Hattiesburg, received the Volunteer Award for his mission work as a layperson.

Sam and Wanda Dees, a lay couple from Hollandale Church, Hollandale, were cited for their work in criminal justice ministry.

A particular highlight of the evening was the testimony of Michael Coles. Coles is pastor of Seventh Church in Baltimore,

Md., notable as being the home church of Annie Armstrong. He told of how several Mississippi mission teams had helped restore the historic structure.

The banquet ended as Kay Cassibry, Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union director, and Jim Didlake, Men's Ministry Director for the Mississippi



KEEPING ANNIE'S DREAM ALIVE — Michael Coles, pastor of Seventh Church in Baltimore, Md., shares how the dream of Annie Armstrong to reach Baltimore for Christ serves as constant reminder of the mission of the historic downtown church. (Photo by Tony Martin)

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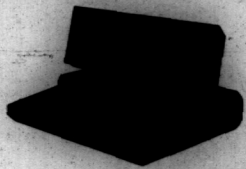
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lication date. Advertising — two calendar
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There's a sweet, sweet spirit in this place, and
I know that it's the presence of the Lord.

Those lyrics could easily have been the
theme song of the 2001 annual meeting of the
Mississippi Baptist Convention, held
October 30-31 at First Church, Jackson. There
was a sweet spirit, and the Lord's abundant
presence permeated the entire gathering.

In this time of national upheaval and
international intrigue, such is welcoming
and comforting news, and more than ample
evidence that when the people of the Lord
humble themselves and properly
prepare for worship and praise, the
Holy Spirit will indeed descend upon
them individually and collectively.

Each year that Mississippi
Baptists come together to make
their joyful noise before the Lord
and tend to the business of the con-
vention, that fact becomes more
and more obvious for all to see.

While attendance could have
been better (the total of 1,232 regis-
tered messengers was quite a drop
from the 1,558 messengers regis-
tered last year), the people who
came this year from churches across
Mississippi were the living, breath-
ing model of the axiom, "Quality,
not quantity." This was a choice,
quality group of believers.

Richard Jackson, director of the Jackson
Center for Evangelism and Encouragement
in Brownwood, Texas, delivered a stirring
series of Bible Treasures built around theme
of the meeting: By Grace — Redeemed,
Renewed, Restored, Resurrected. What a
great tradition we have in the Bible
Treasures.

If there was a single person in the
Sanctuary of First Church who wasn't
deeply moved by Jackson's descriptions of
God's undeserved grace toward us and
Jackson's further exhortations to get busy
about the important work left to us by our
Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, said person
didn't have a pulse.

The 166th Annual Session
of the Mississippi Baptist
Convention has come and gone.
The book of reports and this
issue of The Baptist Record give
plenty of helpful information
concerning the business of the
convention, but there are several
things worth noting that proba-
bly won't be seen anywhere else
in print except right here:

- Every time I enter the sanc-
tuary of First Church, Jackson,
I'm reminded of what Roy
Acuff said when he first saw
Carnegie Hall in New York
City: "I wonder how much hay
this place would hold?" Acuff's
comment aside, First Church
has one of the prettiest sanctu-
aries in the Southern Baptist
Convention, and those folks are
awfully gracious to let us
invade their church each year.

- They should have provided
"trick-or-treat" bags for every-
one. I'm convinced that several
people avoided buying candy
for their neighborhood kids;
they stocked up at the display
booths in the exhibit hall and
didn't have to spend a dime.

- Just because you're a good
Mississippi Baptist doesn't mean
that you're immune to greed. I
watched one woman scoop up
two handfuls of pencils from the

A rare privilege

There were powerful,
pointed sermons and testi-
monies to the working of the
Lord in the lives of individual
Christians. The praise
through music was outstand-
ing. The elections for the top
three convention offices, all
vacant this year, were a cred-
it to the candidates, the elec-
torate, and God.

The Scripture Readings
from each session were a real
eye-opener for those of us still
content to do church 1950s-
style. The passages were read
from the variety of languages
in which Mississippians wor-
ship each Sunday —
Vietnamese, Choctaw,
Chinese, and Spanish — and
even then didn't begin to
scratch the diverse yearnings
for the Good News that are to
be found in our beloved state.

The fields are indeed white
unto harvest. It appears that
we Mississippi Baptists are
well aware of that fact and are
racing to reach people and
people groups who didn't even exist within
the boundaries of Mississippi just a few
decades ago.

To that end, messengers adopted another
record-setting budget of \$30,522,692. We
trust the Lord will provide and Mississippi
Baptists will give, even in the midst of the
country's current economic difficulties.

Mississippi Baptists are singular in their
determination to reach our state, nation, and
world for Jesus, and it's that determination
that allows us to stand with the giants in the
Christian world. It's almost impossible to go
on any mission field in the world where a
Mississippi Baptist hasn't already been.

In some of our sister state conventions,
Baptists have spent their annual meetings
this year arguing and splitting and threaten-
ing to sue each other. Proud, boastful words
like "takeover" and "conspiracy" and "slate



of candidates" are openly spoken. There is
an embarrassment of finger-pointing and
name-calling among the brethren.

What a poor image to project to a lost
world. May the Lord forbid such behavior in
Mississippi, and may he continue to protect
us from the machinations of our true enemy
— the evil one who continually roams the
earth seeking whom he can devour.

When you say your prayers tonight, be
sure to thank God for the unanimity and
determination with which he has blessed
Mississippi Baptists, and thank him too for
seeing to it that you are a Mississippi Baptist.

In our mixed-up world, that is a rare
privilege indeed.

*Sweet, Sweet Spirit. Music and lyrics by
Doris Akers. Arranged by Kurt Keiser.
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IN MY VIEW:

The scoop on the Mississippi Baptist Convention

By Tony Martin, Associate Editor

Sunday School booth when no
one was looking. Gotcha, lady!
You know who you are.

- When you see three or four
pastors huddled together talk-
ing excitedly in the hall, you can
bet they're plotting something...
or talking about football.

- It's all about contacts and
who you know, isn't it? I watched
one gentleman hand out business
cards by the handful. I don't
know if he was running for
something or trying to get out of
his church. Maybe both.

- Overheard in a rest room:
"I've been prayin' that Jabez
prayer, and it hasn't took yet."

- If you were a first-time
convention attendee, were you
confused by all the matching
neckties on Tuesday as I was? I
thought there was a dress code

that no one had told me about.
Turns out that's the appropriate
dress if you're a member of the
Singing Churchmen — and
boy, did they raise the roof.

- Speaking of clothing, one
trend spotted was the combina-
tion of a denim-blue dress shirt
and a yellow tie. It looks pretty
good, actually.

- Charles Lowrey's line about
Jesus "traveling about the coun-
tryside casting out deacons"
might have been perceived by
some pastors at the convention
as a prophetic utterance.

- Looking around during
the business and worship ses-
sions, I've concluded that there
is a direct correlation between
how important someone
believes themselves to be and
how much they smile. Folks

who think they're important
are a humorless bunch.

- Wouldn't you love to be a
fly on the wall in the
Resolutions Committee? I
heard one resolution didn't
even make it to the floor of the
convention — a fellow wanted
to do away with February,
because "the weather's usually
so bad, and it's such a short
month, anyway."

- I watched one pastor flail
away with his arms and spew
saliva all over two of his bud-
dies, he was so mad. I wondered
what huge theological or politi-
cal issue had provoked this guy.
Turned out he'd just missed the
shuttle to the parking lot.

- If you're sitting at the press
table, you can take off your
shoes if your feet hurt and no
one is the wiser. At least, I hope
they weren't.

- All in all, this was a cordial,
productive, enjoyable conven-
tion. The music and messages
were great. Outgoing president
Kermit McGregor served us all
well, and kept things clicking
right along. We look forward to
new president Frank Pollard's
leadership this next year. I'll
just bet we're the envy of many
other state conventions.

See y'all next year!

Churches, chaplains linked in prison effort

JACKSON, La. (BP) — It's not every day that prisoners at Dixon Correctional Institute (DCI) enjoy jambalaya under the huge oak tree on the prison grounds, much less a relaxing two-hour outdoor program of Christian humor, entertainment, and inspiration.

That's just the idea with Operation Starting Line, a national effort by a variety of evangelical Christian groups to reach out to the broader prison population — those who wouldn't likely attend chapel meetings and Bible studies that characterize the Christian presence in most correctional institutions.

"Our intent is to try to touch people who aren't normally touched in the prison," said Gary Pearce, director of chaplaincy for DCI and a Southern Baptist.

The Dixon effort, sponsored by the North American Mission Board (NAMB), was just one leg of a 10-day blitz of Louisiana prisons in late September characteristic of the Operation Starting Line strategy.

The ministry networks chaplains, volunteers, and churches to help evangelize and disciple inmates at a time when they are most receptive to spiritual change, said Ken Ellis, NAMB's chaplaincy associate who coordinates the agency's involvement in Operation Starting Line.

"Southern Baptists, with our tremendous network of church-

es and chaplains, can pool those resources so these men and women won't fall through the cracks when they come out of the criminal justice system," Ellis said.

"It is amazing how often major initiatives of the Lord throughout Scripture occurred in prisons," added NAMB President Bob Reccord, who spoke to prisoners the day before at another unit at Dixon.

"Wouldn't it be just like God to start the next Great Awakening in the context of the prison? I thank God Southern Baptists are going where the need is to proclaim the One who is the answer to every need," he said.

The program at Dixon was fairly typical of Operation Starting Line events. A master of ceremonies introduces a succession of speakers and musical artists, each of whom blends their talents with a word of testimony or exhortation.

"DCI! Yeah!" cheered Christian comedian Thor Ramsey. "I'm glad to be here. I got busted, and this is my community service."

Christian singer Eddie Middleton sang a medley of Motown favorites, with lyrics revamped to reflect the gospel: "Jesus, I need your lovin'. Got to have all your lovin'."

Vocalist Matt Seward of Columbus, Ohio, and an Operation Starting Line veteran, punctuated his music to reiterate the same theme.

"We've been in about five other states just to tell you one thing. God loves you, and he has a plan for your life," he said.

The final speaker was John Yarbrough, NAMB vice president of evangelism, who

brought the purpose of the event to a focus.

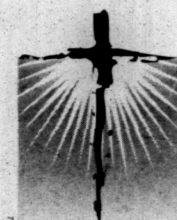
"The greatest thing we can tell you today is not how much talent these guys have. It's not what they do, it's who they know," he said before launching into several illustrations to communicate the truth of Christ.

He told of his own experience assembling a ride-on toy for his daughter, and how he discovered too late that he had irreversibly put the wheels on backward.

"Have you ever gotten the wheels on wrong and looked in the instruction book and found out it is too late?" he said.

In a direct illustration of God's sacrifice, he told of how his brother took the punishment that only he deserved.

"My brother said, 'Don't spank Johnny. Spank me instead,'" Yarbrough related. "What Jesus did is he looked up at this father and said, 'Don't take Johnny. Take me instead.'"



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THE
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FRONT PAGE

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Hoax grounds flight

ARLINGTON, Texas (BP) — An American Airlines flight with a Baptist missions team headed by a former Mississippi minister made an unscheduled landing October 29 at Washington Dulles International Airport after a passenger found a written bomb threat on board, officials said. The note was a hoax, according to an FBI agent who spoke on condition of anonymity. The woman who discovered the note, Rose Harris, was part of a 15-member volunteer mission team from the Church of Rush Creek in Arlington, Texas, that had been assisting a new church start in Manhattan's upper west side. The church's senior pastor, Russ Barksdale, is a former singles minister at First Church, Jackson. "We had been in the air for about 45 minutes when the pilot came on and said that a lady had found a disturbing note," Barksdale told Baptist Press. "It turned out to be Rose. She had pulled down her dinner tray and the note fell out. The note said there was a bomb on the plane and it was going to blow up at 8 p.m. They didn't tell us information about what was in the note, but word was circulating around the cabin. One of my associate pastors was sitting with Rose and trying to calm her down." As for the mission team members, Barksdale said they prayed throughout the ordeal and noted that no one was in a panic. "We had a group of people not looking to check out," Barksdale said, "but we were prepared if we had to. It's one of those things where you are thankful to be safe." Barksdale, Harris, and several other passengers sustained minor injuries while evacuating the aircraft via the inflated emergency chutes. Harris was the most seriously injured, with a broken ankle.

Looking back

10 years ago

Paige Patterson of Dallas, one of the chief architects of the conservative movement within the Southern Baptist Convention, is allegedly dismissed as president of Criswell College in Dallas. Patterson states the move was due to a "philosophical difference."

20 years ago

David P. Haney, director of the Baptist Men's Department at the Brotherhood Commission, resigns to become a consultant. Trustee chairman Jack Knox states that "we have parted company on good terms. I am disappointed people are trying to read a lot of things into this."

50 years ago

W.A. Criswell, "pastor of the First Church of Dallas, Tex., the largest white church in the world," addresses the Mississippi Baptist Convention. His message closed and climaxed the program on state missions on Tuesday night.

Anthrax scare hits SWBTS campus

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — Southwestern Seminary (SWBTS) in Fort Worth on October 16 joined the list of hundreds of organizations enduring anthrax scares. A powder came out of a box of envelopes and brushed onto a business office employee in the seminary's historic Memorial Building.

Mark Sheldon, Southwestern's director of financial services and controller, notified the seminary's security department after learning about the substance.

"Because of our exposure to the world as being one of the largest seminaries," SWBTS security chief Randy Austin said, "and because we [have alumni serving in] countries where the gospel is not allowed to be preached, the local Fort Worth authorities take any calls from Southwestern seriously."

"We were relieved this was not anthrax or any other (dangerous) substance," Austin said, "and on a positive side, this became a good training exercise for both the seminary and the Fort Worth emergency response entities."

Graham breaks records in Calif. crusade

FRESNO, Calif. (BP) — California's agricultural heartland yielded a harvest of souls Oct. 11-14 as evangelist Billy Graham preached on God's love and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ during a record-setting "outreach" in Fresno.

Undeterred by a broken foot and unprecedented security precautions, Graham launched the four-day event at Fresno's Bulldog Stadium exactly one month after terrorist attacks struck New York and suburban Washington, DC.

The preacher known as "America's Pastor" referred to the tragic events each time he spoke. "Something about what happened on Sept. 11 caused people to think about spiritual things for maybe the first time in years," Graham said. "We are living in a different world, which will be felt in every area of our society for years to come."

"We are in troubled times. We're going to have to rethink our lives," Graham continued, "but in the midst of all that, there is one hope, that Jesus Christ said he is coming again. Without hope our nation will not go on."

Graham, 82, broke his foot in three places in his Fresno hotel room two days before the campaign. He arrived on the platform each night in a wheelchair, accompanied by his son Franklin Graham, CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

When it came time to preach, the senior Graham walked

slowly to the pulpit aided by his son or another associate and wearing a brace on his injured foot.

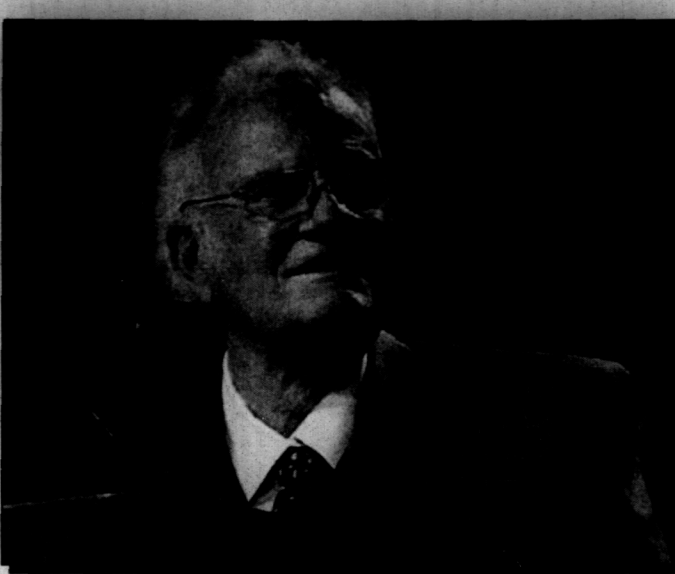
Graham seemed to grow stronger each night of the campaign.

"The Bible teaches that we need to have faith and believe things we don't understand," the evangelist declared. "I don't understand why those hijackers hit those two, great buildings in New York, or hit the Pentagon."

"I don't understand that, but I accept by faith that there is a sovereign God. "Maybe God is speaking to us. Maybe God is saying, 'It's time for you to repent and get right with God and change your way of living and change this state and this country.'"

Thousands responded to Graham's nightly call to repentance. They streamed down from the bleachers and gathered in front of the high-tech stage erected for the mission to pray to receive Christ.

Immediately, trained counselors recorded each decision



MESSAGE OF LOVE — Billy Graham preaches about God's love and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ at Fresno's Bulldog Stadium during the evangelist's Central California mission Oct. 11-14. (BP photo by Mark A. Wyatt)

and distributed Christian literature to the new believers.

"I just joined the group!" an excited convert told the California Southern Baptist after he prayed with nearly 3,000 others crowding the stadium floor.

Campaign organizers reported 14,731 spiritual decisions registered during four evening services and a Saturday morning children's program. Nearly all were reported to be first-time professions of faith in Jesus Christ.

A Graham spokesman said attendance totaled 201,000 in five sessions including a stadium record-shattering 62,000 on hand

for a Saturday night "Concert for the Next Generation."

An overflow crowd numbering 15,000 packed a neighboring baseball complex equipped with a giant video screen while 47,000 people jammed the Fresno State University stadium.

The stadium crowd alone eclipsed an attendance record set during a game featuring the nationally ranked Fresno State Bulldogs just weeks earlier.

The youth-oriented concert featuring Kirk Franklin, dc Talk, and Gamaliel Ruiz also drew the one-millionth young person to attend one of the Graham campaign events.

Security procedures combined with capacity crowds delayed entrance to the stadium by as much as 90 minutes for some attending the event.

Police used mirrors to examine the underside of every vehicle entering stadium parking lots while security officers searched handbags and used metal-detecting wands to scan every visitor.

More than 500 churches from 54 denominations and some 20,000 volunteers helped stage the four-day campaign in the heart of California's San Joaquin Valley.

The event, more than a year in the planning, originally was called the Central Valley Billy Graham Crusade, using the term made familiar during Graham's 52 years of ministry.

Pastor's Conf. taps Dominy as president-elect

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

Pastors and church staffers from across the state gathered October 29 in the Sanctuary of First Church, Jackson, for the 2001 Mississippi Baptist Pastor's Conference. Held each year prior to the start of the Mississippi Baptist Convention's

annual meeting, the conference features preaching and music designed to encourage and support pastors and other attendees.

Conference officers for the coming year were also chosen. Bob Dominy, pastor of Park Place Church, Brandon, was picked as president-elect, while Eric Thomas, pastor of First Church, Vicksburg, will move from president-elect to president. Dean Stewart, pastor of 38th Avenue Church, Hattiesburg, was selected to serve as treasurer.

Jim Butler, pastor of Trinity Church, Southaven, nominated Dominy. David Sapp, pastor of Sylva Rena Church, Water Valley, nominated Stewart. Both Dominy and Stewart were elected without opposition.

Thomas succeeds full-time evangelist Daryl Oster of Brandon as president. Stewart succeeds Lowell Ingram, pastor of First Church, Mathiston, as treasurer.

Chuck Herring, pastor of First Church, Richland, kicked off the afternoon session sermons with a message from Ezekiel 37. "The Holy Spirit is to be the dominating presence in a church," he said.

Tom Atwood, pastor of First Church, Oxford, delivered the second afternoon session sermon. Drawing from 2 Chronicles 30, he said, "I have come to believe the life of the believer is a life of worship. Worship is the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer."

Fred Wolfe, interim pastor of Crossgates Church, Brandon, and president of Barnabas Ministries in Brandon, closed out the afternoon messages with a sermon from Rom. 13. Referring to the September 11 atrocities in New York City, Washington,

D.C., and Pennsylvania, he said, "If you want to get angry, get angry with the devil — he is the murderer."

Scott Griffin, pastor of Enon Church, Mantee, led the congregational singing. Special music was provided by Steve Walker, music evangelist from Pinola.

The afternoon session began with a welcome and prayer from Oster, and was closed with a benediction by Eric Thomas.

Bob Pittman, pastor of Kirby Woods Church, Memphis, delivered the first sermon of the evening session. Drawing from the brief depiction of Shamgar in Judges 3, Pittman pointed out, "Why didn't he slay more than 600 Philistines? He did all he could; that's all God asks you to do."

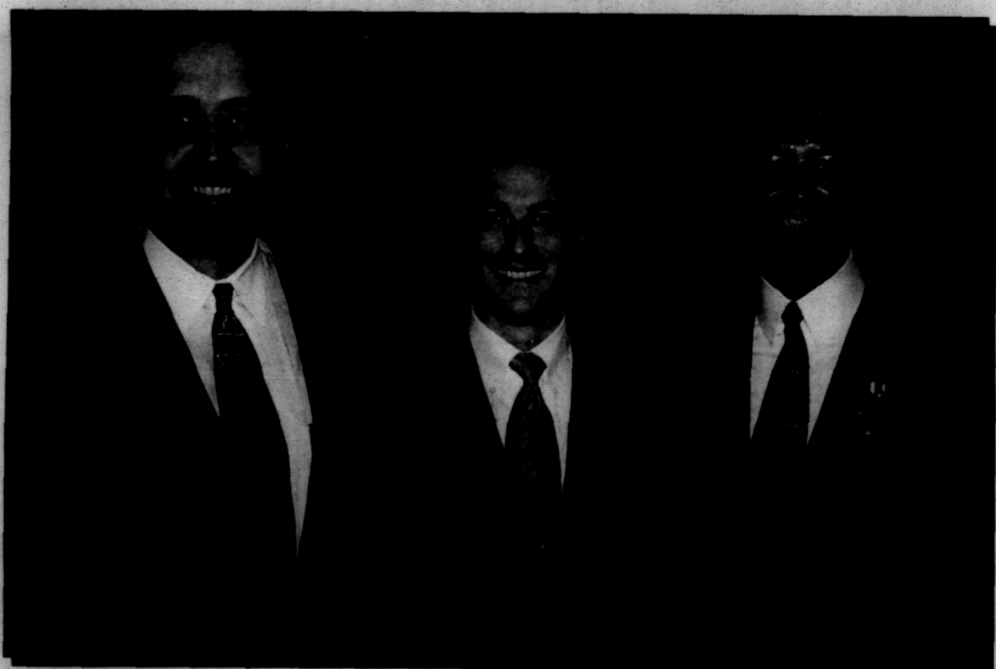
Richard Land, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, delivered the final sermon of the conference.

Utilizing several biblical passages, Land said, "There is no sense in which our Lord is not God. He is fully God and fully man. He took on the form of man without losing his deity."

Griffin led congregational singing in the evening session, while special music was provided by the Newlife Quartet and Joseph Oster, minister of music at Harmony Church, Crystal Springs.

The evening session began with a welcome and prayer from Daryl Oster, and closed with a benediction by Lowell Ingram, pastor of First Church, Mathiston, and outgoing treasurer of the pastor's conference.

The 2002 Mississippi Baptist Pastor's Conference will be held October 28 at First Church, Jackson.



PASTORS' CONFERENCE OFFICERS — Officers of the Mississippi Baptist Pastor's Conference for 2001-02 are (from left) president-elect Bob Dominy, pastor of Park Place Church, Brandon; president Eric Thomas, pastor of First Church, Vicksburg; and immediate past president Daryl Oster, a full-time evangelist from Brandon. Not pictured is treasurer Dean Stewart, pastor of 38th Avenue Church, Hattiesburg. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Lottie offering info available on web site

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Southern Baptists tackling the challenge of the \$120 million Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions will find an array of resources available on the Internet.

Video, music, photo essays, prayer pointers, and virtual prayerwalks are among the aids at the 2001 International Missions Emphasis (IME) website, www.imb.org/ime.

Also available: feature articles, testimonies, clip art, downloadable photos, key statistics, and colorful graphs to help convey the urgency of taking the good news of salvation to those who have never heard.

The missions emphasis theme, *The Unfinished Task: Planting with Passion*, focuses on the work of Southern Baptist missionaries in planting their lives among their people groups to multiply disciples and new churches into church-planting movements.

The IME site offers ideas for promoting the offering, which provides nearly half the support of nearly 5,100 missionaries serving 1,117 people groups around the world. Links for ordering IME resources also can be found at the website.

A breakdown of what it costs to support missionaries by the minute, the hour, the day, etc., also is posted on the site. A detailed biography of the legendary Southern Baptist missionary for whom the offering is named can be found there as well.

Every dollar given to the offering is used 100% for overseas witness and ministry. The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering provides 46% of the support for the Southern Baptist International Mission Board and

5,043 missionaries engaging 1,125 people groups in 185 countries. The Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' unified budget generates 36% of the IMB's income.



Planting with Passion

Southern Baptists across the country will collect the offering in December, with a special emphasis on a missions study and week of prayer Dec. 2-9. That missions study focuses on the ways God is using cultural, physical, and political changes among the Maasai of eastern Africa to open their eyes to the truth of his Word.

Teaching guides for adults, youth, children, and preschool and a promotional packet are available in LifeWay Christian Stores and from Woman's Missionary Union (www.wmu.com).

Additional free resources to raise missions awareness — a special edition of *The Commission* magazine, a *Planting with Passion* video, and a CD with PowerPoint presentations, people group profiles, video

clips, and a photo gallery — are available on the International Mission Board's website (www.imb.org/resources).

Contributions to the offering have risen steadily from \$23.2 million in 1974 to more than \$113 million in 2000. Total receipts for the offering since its inception in 1888 stand at almost \$2.1 billion. The \$3,000 collected in the first offering was used to send three women to China to help Moon, who sailed to China as a Southern Baptist missionary in 1873 and served 39 years.

Along the way, she challenged established norms — refusing to be confined to the schoolteacher role reserved for young women, leaving the safety of the Baptist compound to live in "wild" villages, and giving up Western comforts for local ways.

Moon pushed the bounds that kept her from taking the Gospel to the edge. She paid a price in friendships, in privacy, and with her life, giving her own food to others suffering in the famine of 1912. She died from starvation on Christmas Eve 1912 in the harbor at Kobe, Japan.

• *Woman's Missionary Union auxiliary of the Southern Baptist Convention also can be contacted by calling toll-free (800) 968-7301.*

• *Video: Lottie Moon's journey of faith: http://real.imb.org:8080/ramgen/Media/120022_hi.rm.*

• *Music: *Zambian Acapella sings "Reach Out": http://real.imb.org:8080/ramgen/Media/Reach_Out.rm.**

• *More IME videos, music, virtual prayerwalks: <http://www.imb.org/ime/gallery.htm>.*

MIA

Most people are familiar with this nomenclature — MIA. In military jargon, it stands for "Missing in Action." Now if someone is MIA it could mean that they have been captured by the enemy. It might refer to the fact that they had deserted. They may have been killed and just not found. They are MIA — missing in action.

A friend of mine had a little mixed-breed feist dog that was raised in the backyard of their home. He was still a small pup, just a few months old, when my friend began to realize what an outstanding hunting sense this dog had. This little feist dog's instinct was to hunt squirrels. It was almost impossible for squirrels to come close to the big trees in the backyard without being spotted and treed by this little dog.

As the dog got older, his maturity showed up as completely reliable. He was an effective "squirrel finder" in their back yard. In time, the teenage son of my friend and some buddies of his were going to go hunting. They decided it was time to let the little dog do his work for real, so one morning they got the dog and headed out to the woods. Sure enough, at the very crack of dawn, the little dog went absolutely crazy. They had only been out there about ten minutes when the dog spotted something. Running, barking, dancing around the trunk of the tree and trying to climb it all at the same time, the young hunter knew that something was up there. The hunters



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

walked around the tree watching and waiting to spot a squirrel and hopefully get a good shot. There it was! One of them spotted a squirrel up in the tree and aimed, pulled the trigger — "Boom" — one shot and one squirrel was harvested.

While the guys were focused on the squirrel, the little dog immediately split the scene. He was long gone — MIA. In fact, it was late in the day before the guys who had gone out to hunt squirrels finished their day's task of hunting for the hunting dog. They finally found him near the house, but their great squirrel hunt had bagged only one squirrel and then the dog was gone. That little dog had never heard a shotgun blast and when he did, he was out of there!

Occasionally, what happened to the little dog happens to some of us. It is not unusual for a believer to act like that little hunting pup. Oh, there are a lot of different sounds of explosions around us that make us decide, "I'm out of here!" For one thing, fear seems to have that impact. Do you remember Thomas? We call him "Doubting Thomas." He was a good disciple. He stuck with

Jesus through everything that happened — that is as long as they were feeding the five-thousand, fixing the broken-hearted, and mending the wounded. Then one day there was the cannon sound of crucifixion and Thomas took off. He would not even meet with the disciples on Resurrection Sunday. Thomas was MIA.

I am confident that with complete justification in Thomas' own mind and a rationale behind his decision, he figured he had had enough and it was, "Thanks fellows, I'm out of here." Fear can do that to you.

Another thing that seems to cause people to be MIA is the world itself. Paul said of Demas, "He has forsaken me, having loved this present world." I wonder what it was that lured this disciple away from his calling and commitment? What was it in this world that trapped him? I believe that Paul left it unstated and open to speculation because the top five things that might have lured disciples away and entrapped them in the first century may not be the top five today. Yet, it still happens. It can be said of far too many today that, "he was a great pastor, or minister, until..."

Then, if you finish the sentence, it is a description of the world sinking its claws into his life.

Another thing that seems to capture way too many of God's people is **lethargy** — a kind of spiritual laziness or sort of a sad unresponsiveness. They are MIA simply because they are tuned out and do not realize that the action is going on. I think of those disciples who at the very closing hours of Jesus' life were sound asleep. Even after Jesus asked them to pray, they fell asleep. When he needed them the most, they were asleep. Even though they heard his voice, they went to sleep. Within almost touching distance of Jesus, they went to sleep. Does that remind you of anything or anyone? Perhaps you or me on Sunday morning or Sunday evening. Within tuning in distance of hearing from God as his spokesman proclaims the Word, we just go to sleep. In close proximity to what God is doing, we are still MIA.

There are two very important truths that you need to remember and one is that even if you are MIA, Jesus is still looking for you! Jesus is not going to give up on you easily, and he wants you back in his army. The second truth to remember is to keep in mind that the Lord is never going to desert you. You may fail him but he's not going to let you down. It is for that reason the Apostle Paul wrote in his second letter to Timothy expressing the fact that everybody had forsaken him, but that the Lord stood by him. Amen! He will stand by you also!

Registration opening for Senior Conv.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Saddle up, pull on your best pair of boots, and mosey on out to Fort Worth, Texas, April 15-17, 2002, for the fourth national Senior Adult Convention, sponsored by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

One-day tickets are not available for the expected sell-out conference, according to Larry Mizell, senior adult events specialist for LifeWay. The conference cost is \$60 per person and does not include hotels or meals.

A list of hotels offering special rates is available with the registration packet.

"Joy in the Journey" is the theme of the fourth Senior Adult Convention, Mizell said. The conferences are held every four to five years with previous conventions taking place in Fort Worth in 1987, Atlanta, in 1993, and Nashville, Tenn., in 1997.

Speakers include Bruce Wilkinson, author of the best-selling book, *The Prayer of Jabez*; T.W. Hunt, author of the discipleship course, *Mind of Christ*; and Esther Burroughs, author, women's motivational speaker, and founder of Esther Burroughs Ministries.

For more information or to register, call (800) 254-2022 or fax (615) 251-3730.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



Women On Mission (WOM) of First Church, Pascagoula, recently held an installation service for its new 2002 officers. The installed officers (pictured, from left) are Dean Coulter, WOM coordinator; Beverly McCloud, vice coordinator; Lou Ann Lee, mission study director; Jane Holder, mission support director; Mildred Tuck, mission action director; and Miriam Causey, secretary-treasurer. Seven facilitators were also installed. Jane Fairley did the installation program.

Louin Church, Louin, will celebrate 95 years of service on Nov. 11. Services will begin at 11 a.m. followed by dinner on the grounds. Hueston Adkins will be the speaker.

Members of **Oakland Heights Church, Meridian**, helped construct a children's dorm at Laurel Lake Baptist Camp in Corbin, Kentucky. Pictured (from left) are Milton Pace, Charlie Smith, Dale Cornwell, Chris Smith, David Kowall, and Mike Russell.



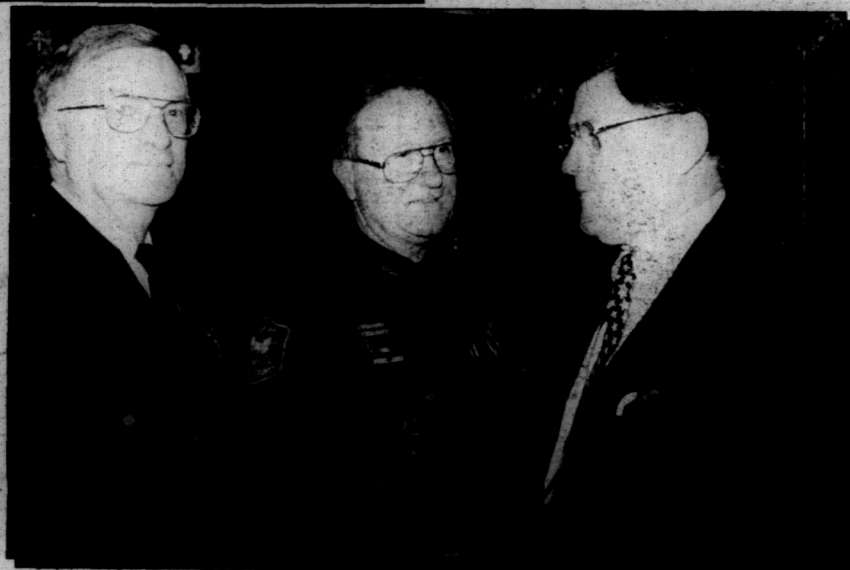
Members of Oakland Heights Church, Meridian

First Church, Tchula, will hold Harvest Day on Nov. 11. Activities include Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; and a meal will be served in fellowship hall following morning services. Larry Edwards is pastor.

The Greens from Boone, N.C., will be in concert at Harmony Church, Crystal Springs, at 7 p.m. on Nov. 15. For more information call (601) 847-4375 or (601) 892-1121.

Trinity Church, Laurel, will have a dedication service for its new sanctuary and education space, on Nov. 18. Activities include Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., dedication service at 10:30 a.m., dinner on the grounds, and gospel singing. Tom Boone is pastor.

Fernwood Church, Gulfport, will host its annual Thanksgiving banquet following the 11 a.m. service on Nov. 11. Jim Kultau is pastor. For additional information, call (228) 896-4556.



Ward, Byrd, and Yancey

First Church, Pascagoula, held a special appreciation day on Oct. 7 for the police and fire departments, Jackson County sheriff's department, and local emergency technicians. The

patriotic service also paid tribute to the victims and families of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Pictured (from left) are Drexel Ward, fire chief; Mike Byrd, sheriff, and Rex Yancey, pastor.



Scott County RA Day was held at Harpersville Church, Forest, on Sept. 29. Pictured (above) are participants in the sack race, one of the many events held for the 100 RA's grades 1-12 and counselors.

Revival dates

Cross Roads, Biloxi: Nov. 11-15; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Thurs., 7 p.m.; Bobby Perry, evangelist; Zeno Wells, music; Robert M. Carlisle, pastor.

Mt. Moriah (Lincoln): Nov. 18-21; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Wayne Moak, evangelist; Mike and Angela Britt, music; Danriy Moss, pastor.



Green's Creek Church, Petal, held a recognition service for GAs (pictured) at Sept. 23. Mike Routon is pastor.

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